

# A or An?

## USE 1

The article **a** is used before singular, countable nouns which begin with consonant sounds.

Examples:

He is **a** teacher.

She doesn't own **a** car.

I saw **a** bear at the zoo.

## USE 2

The article **an** is used before singular, countable nouns which begin with vowel sounds.

Examples:

He is **an** actor.

She didn't get **an** invitation.

I saw **an** eagle at the zoo.

### **USE 3**

Remember that **A(AN)** means "**one**" or "**a single**". You cannot use **A(AN)** with plural nouns.

#### **Examples:**

I saw **a** bears in Yellowstone National Park. Not  
Correct (неправильно)

I saw bears in Yellowstone National Park. Correct (  
правильно)

## USE 4

If there is an adjective ( прилагательное) or an adverb-adjective (наречие- прилагательное) combination before the noun, **A(AN)** should agree with the first sound in the adjective or the adverb-adjective combination.

Examples:

He is **an** excellent teacher.

I saw a really beautiful eagle at the zoo.

## USE 5

Use **A** before words such as "European" or "university" which sound like they start with a consonant even if the first letter is a vowel. Also use **A** before letters and numbers which sound like they

begin with a consonant, such as "U", "J", "1" or "9". Remember, it is the sound not the spelling which is important. For example, "1" is spelled O-N-E; however, it is pronounced "won" like it starts with a "W".

Examples:

She has a euro. Sounds like "yu-ro".

That number is a "1". Sounds like "won".

## USE 6

Use **AN** before words such as "hour" which sound like they start with a vowel even if the first letter is a consonant. Also use **AN** before letters and numbers which sound like they begin with a vowel, such as "F" or "8". Remember, it is the sound not the spelling

which is important. For example, "F" is pronounced "eff" like it starts with an "E".

Examples:

I only have **an** hour for lunch. Sounds like "au-er".

Does his name begin with **an** "F"? Sounds like "eff".

## **USE 7**

Some words such as "herb" or "hospital" are more complicated because they are pronounced differently in different English accents. In most American accents, the "h" in "herb" is silent, so Americans usually say "an herb". In many British accents, the "h" in "herb" is pronounced, so many British say "a herb". In some British accents, the "h" in hospital is silent, so

some British will say "an hospital" instead of "a hospital".

## USE 8

In English, some nouns are considered uncountable such as: information, air, advice, salt and fun. We do not use **A(AN)** with these uncountable nouns. (Learn more about countable and uncountable nouns.)

Examples:

She gives a good advice. Not Correct

She gives good advice. Correct

## THE

You use **the** when you know that the listener knows or can work out what particular person/thing you are talking about.

For example:

"**The** apple you ate was rotten."

"Did you lock **the** car?"

You should also use **the** when you have already mentioned the thing you are talking about.

For example:

"She's got two children; a girl and a boy. **The** girl's eight and **the** boy's fourteen."

We also use **the** when we know there is only one of a particular thing.

For example:

**the** sun, **the** wind, **the** world, **the** North Pole etc..

However if you want to describe a particular instance of these you should use a/an.

For example:

"I could hear **the** wind." / "There's **a** cold wind blowing."

"What are your plans for **the** future?" / "She has **a** promising future ahead of her."